

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

HOLIDAY STRESS

Thanksgiving and the winter holidays can be filled with busy schedules, parties, shopping, laughter, but also there can be tension and stress. For many people, the holidays mean time off from regular activities, while sharing good times and good food with family and friends. For others, this can be a frustrating and anxiety-provoking time, due to changes in work and exercise habits and dietary concerns. For many, holidays are shared with family, friends and loved ones, yet for many this can be a difficult or dreaded time.

At home, some feel weighted down by old rules or expectations. Feeling compelled to live up to family expectations which may even be dysfunctional can leave one feeling angry, guilty or worthless. Under stress, it may be difficult to avoid returning to old behavior patterns which you know to be ultimately harmful, such as over or under eating.

There are a number of things you can do for yourself during the upcoming holiday season:

- It might help to have a heart-to-heart with your parent(s) about your concerns. There may be a need to revise old rules which no longer fit. A conflict of values and ideas is normal. If you can stay out of a blaming or victim mode, you will feel more in control and maintain a clearer perspective regarding your differences.
- Practice gratitude. Gratitude makes us feel better about our lives, our relationships and ourselves. Try spending a few minutes each day taking stock of the day's kindnesses and unexpected pleasures. Or, just make it a habit to say thank you.
- For many, it is necessary to find a quiet place to be with their inner self. This could involve writing a letter, reading or meditating. Keeping a journal of your feelings over holiday periods may help you to get a grip on your emotional responses. Seeing more clearly will empower you to act, not react.

Food, food and more food!

The holidays are normally a time to celebrate with food, traditional family dishes and lavish desserts. Eating is very much a part of the holidays and causes anxiety for many of us because we are afraid that we will overeat or not eat as "healthy" as we normally do. How much can we eat? What will the scale read after the holidays?

It is important to take care of your physical body, to exercise and to eat well. Eating is essential to living, and food is part of the holiday season for most of us. Sometimes we overeat at holiday food tables. It is much better to use moderation instead of starvation as a response. Guilt is a waste of energy, and preoccupation with certain foods can be unhealthy. Try to eat slowly and enjoy the food that you are eating. Instead of using food to deal with stress and tension, consider exercise, fresh air, taking time for you, talking with friends and meditation. Remind yourself that avoiding your feelings or soothing yourself with food or alcohol will not be helpful.

If you need more tips on beating holiday stress, visit the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) member website for articles, self-help programs and more on stress management. Remember, your EAP is here around the clock to connect you to a licensed professional if you need more support.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

1-866-EAP-4SOC (1-866-327-4762)

TTY USERS SHOULD CALL: 1-800-424-6117

Visit www.eap.calhr.ca.gov or call today to learn more about EAP services.